

TOWN GOVERNMENT STUDY COMMITTEE

SEPTEMBER 17, 2014

TOWN HALL GREAT HALL

Committee: Donahue, Gross, Sereiko, Ulfelder, Brooks, Goldberg, Perlmutter

Other: Nagle

Vice Chair Rosemary Donahue called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM. She announced that meeting was being taped by the Wellesley Channel for broadcast and web streaming.

There were no citizens present to address the committee.

Donahue asked for Committee member to give interview reports.

Rich Page – IT Director Tom D’Orazio

IT department functions town wide to install and maintain network infrastructure and IT systems.

IT also supports phone systems and GIS.

Director reports to the Executive Director. D’Orazio has been IT director since 1988.

Department works cooperatively with all departments at the staff level.

Staff assists other departments with data needs and facilitate cross department use of data resources.

Donahue noted – impressed with the level of thoughtful planning for the IT needs of the whole town.

Ann Marie Gross – Treasurer/Collector Marc Waldman

The Treasurer/Collector is responsible for cash management, debt management, and group benefits programs across the town. The Treasurer report to the Finance Director (Sheryl Strother)

Waldman reports that the billing and collection functions are efficient and effective. Wellesley is one of the few towns that have a consolidated water/sewer/electric billing.

Waldman reports that staff engaged with customer service activities are less well compensated than staff considered subject matter specialists.

Waldman says that the current system works due to staff cooperation and that any system is reliant on the staff to make it work.

Waldman questioned whether all the elected boards are needed.

Sereiko – if not a board then who would have authority?

AMG- Department Head responsibility and authority would have to be restated to include more responsibilities.

Anna Sereiko- Donna McCabe – Chief Assessor

Assessor department has clearly defined directives and is principally governed by state statutes. Wellesley does annual evaluation of properties.

Department has Chief Assessor, 2FT office staff, 1FT field inspector and 1 PT administrative assistant.

State mandates Board training.

McCabe thinks current model of governance works pretty well. She has also served under Town Manager form. Either form can work, it depends on the people executing the model.

McCabe reports that department heads work well together and have formed informal groups to promote cooperation.

Assessing Department is located as the first office in Town Hall for public entry. They frequently answer questions to direct the public to other town hall offices. She reports office hours for some departments are inconsistent and that leads to customer frustration at times. She suggests it would be nice to have a “greeter” function at Town Hall to assist residents in finding their way. Perhaps use of Senior Tax Work off program.

McCabe suggests looking for additional revenue sources such as review of PILOT partnerships for more aggressive revenue sources for the town.

She reports that the permitting process can be frustrating and might lead to loss of revenue due to people giving up.

McCabe states that volunteers in Wellesley are strength and a change in governance or TM might result in a decrease in volunteers.

Arthur Goldberg – Sheryl Strother- Finance Director

Finance Director is appointed by Executive Director and reports to that position. Finance Director appoints and evaluates the Treasurer. She has the authority to appoint and discipline Finance Department staff (5FT)

Finance Department acts as a corporate financial office – payroll processing (including Schools), Muni financial recording system for accounts payable; some purchasing functions; budget analysis.

Some issues with interaction with Schools business operations. Some towns have combined Business office for town and schools.

Town Manager might operate more efficiently and save money – management tools, evaluation of employees more consistently, make town wide strategic decisions.

Page inquired about looking horizontally at IT functions across the town to see if there is any duplication. For example the website pages are run by each department. Are there town wide resources to manage web.

Gross and Sereiko – suggested considering town wide webmaster or information officer.

Gross suggested use of Babson College resources to revise/manage our web site

Arthur Goldberg- Recreation Commission

Recreation Commission is 5 member elected board. They hire Recreation Commissioner (Jan Kaseta) and have staff of 5FT with program that hires instructors/ counselors etc to provide services.

Recreation has a defined mission statement – but other entities also offer programming that overlaps with Recreation programs.

Recreation offers programs at Warren Building and Morses Pond and uses fields. But fields are controlled by Playing Fields Task Force. Schools have authority over School gyms and fields. NRC as control of parks and conservation spaces. DPW has responsibility for maintenance of fields. Each entity can make independent decisions that affect facilities use and condition.

There is overlapping authority to permit field use and not good communication.

Programming offered by Recreation is required to be fee based to cover costs. Other entities that offer programming do not always charge fees – COA, Youth Commission, Library, Schools. Recreation suggests a more consistent fee structure would be preferred.

NRC as Park authority has conservation focus, not recreational uses. Some towns have combined Parks and Recreation, but they caution that could cause decreased emphasis on Recreation uses.

They do rely on Business to subsidize some events

Election after ATM would give commissioners more experience going through a program year and budgeting before the next town meeting.

One member thought TM is too large and would be better with 160 members.

One member thought a Town Manager might be more professional and TM would not be necessary. Possible consideration of a Town Council style governing body.

Idea of centralized calendar for all town activities/programs was raised.

Linda Perlmutter – Human Resources meetings

Scott Szebeck is new HR director. Appointed by Human Resources Board. In process of orienting to operations of this town.

He is aware of the problems in evaluations and is planning training for Boards in this area.

Some issues for good feedback are hard to raise given the board/director relationships.

Human Resources Board is Appointed by the moderator.

HR has mandate to operate the Salary Plan for nonunion employees – set compensation levels for series 40 and 50 employees.

HR doesn't actually hire or discipline employees, but offers staff assistance to departments for employment activities. HR assists with recruitment but does not decide the hiring.

The level of involvement of HR for hiring is dependent on the needs of the department and the level of the position.

Linda commented that the conversation with HR highlighted the "Silo" nature of our departments.

HR director does participate in union negotiations as part of team. HR board has no role in contract negotiations.

Schools do their own hiring. HR manages benefits for schools (and all town employees). There is some lack of communication about Schools and Hr, but this should be improved with the hiring of HR Director on the Schools side.

Calendar:

October 1 – Hans Larsen Presentation of Town Wide Financial Plan at 7 pm ad Library. Then TGSC will meet for our own meeting at Town Hall. (Anna agreed to take minutes for that meeting)

October 8/9 meetings with Advisory Chairs at Library.

October 15 BPW and Schools on TGSC agenda as a group.

BUCKETLIST ADDITIONS:

- Webmaster
- Universal calendar of activities
- Town hall greeter
- Consolidation of purchasing
- Consistency of operating hours
- Public information officer

TODO list

TMM comments- set meeting dates, develop survey tool

Citizen comments- develop survey tool. Explore professional help with town wide survey tool

Look at other departments that have done surveys – methodology and results. (MLP, SCHOOLS, PLANNING, COA)

Minutes – September 3 minutes accepted.

Next Meeting October 1 following Hans Larsen presentation.

Adjourned 9:30 pm

Submitted By Kathy Nagle